

Environmental hotspots

Managing our waste

GENERAL INFORMATION

Hotspots like silage pits and stockyards or poorly designed tracks and races can pollute ground and surface water.

Silage problems often start with poorly wilted pasture, which will create large volumes of leachate. Problems also occur when stormwater run off enters the stack. This increases leaching through the stack, removes valuable quality from the feed and has a negative impact on production, profit and waterways. To avoid these problems, make sure silage is well wilted before it goes into the stack. If you are creating a stack, keep it away from areas where overland stormwater flow can enter the stack and flush out nutrients.

Stockyards and holding paddocks can contribute large volumes of faecal bacteria to streams, depending on placement and drainage flows. To avoid this, yards should be located away from the flow of stormwater and diversions constructed. Alternatively, channel water flow to paddocks.

Badly designed or maintained tracks, races and stock crossing points can create large amounts of soil and effluent run off, increasing phosphate, sediment and faecal bacteria in waterways. This decreases the water's visual clarity and is a risk to human and stock health. Water that ponds on, or scours races is also a problem but can be avoided through good design. In particular, it is important to work with the contour of the land and create stable cut-offs to grass. This decreases the impact on waterways and in the long term reduces the cost of track maintenance.



Silage losing valuable nutrients.

Poorly stored fertiliser can also unwittingly create hotspots. Before use ensure fertiliser is stored in dry, covered areas, preferably with a lined floor to minimise risk and wastage.

Offal pits and old sheep dips are other potential hotspots if leachate reaches groundwater. Soil contamination can create problems for many years. Ensure offal pits are properly positioned and leachate cannot reach groundwater.

Sheep dips and the surrounding area may be contaminated with arsenic or organochlorines (DDT and dieldrin). Arsenic does not break down over time and organochlorines break down very slowly. Both classes of chemicals are highly poisonous to humans and livestock. Fence off these sites.

Rubbish dumps on farm should be at least 10m from waterways and above the water table. Do not put dead animals, offal or hazardous substances (e.g. empty agrichemical containers or oil containers) in your rubbish dump.

Land cultivated from grass and left fallow over the winter will present further hotspots as the nitrogen released from the breakdown of pasture leaches into groundwater. Consider growing a cover crop to take up the nitrogen and protect the soil.



Silage bales and stack.

Photo: J. Barran

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS AND BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Plan silage pits well away from waterways.
- Ensure silage pits are free from stormwater.
- Wilt silage well before placing it in the stack.
- Maintain tracks and races.
- Create stable cut-offs to paddocks from tracks and races.
- Keep stock out of waterways.
- A consent may be required for culvert waterway crossings if the catchment is greater than 10oha.
- Do not leave cultivated land fallow over the winter.
- Store and keep fertiliser dry until used.
- Recycle waste and agrichemical containers (see www.agrecovery.co.nz or www.plasback.co.nz for recovery stations and pick up times in your area).
- Talk to Waikato Regional Council about the disposal of agrichemicals and animal remedies.
- Talk to your silage contractor about disposal of silage wrap.
- Safely store diesel and waste fuel oil.
- Fence out stock and young children from old sheep dip sites.
- Position farm rubbish dumps at least 10m from waterways and above the water table.

**Talk to Waikato Regional Council
about the disposal of agrichemicals
and animal remedies.**

MORE INFORMATION

Contact

- Waikato Regional Council
Freephone 0800 800 401

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